

Introduction to Comments and Responses

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Role of Public Comments

Public involvement is a major element of SEPA. Both the Draft and Final EISs were shaped by public comments. For the DEIS, public comments defined the scope of issues to be addressed. Now, for the FEIS, public comments identify potential deficiencies and errors found in the DEIS, and, where appropriate, King County has responded by revising the EIS text.

This Response to Comments (Volumes 4 and 5) documents King County's consideration of and response to public comments on the DEIS. It provides the background of the changes that were made in response to comments and, in other cases, changes that were not made, and the reasons why.

Public comments on the DEIS are extensive and comprehensive. They cover essentially every point addressed in the DEIS, as well as many points that were not. Many comment letters were well researched, many were prepared by professional consultants, and many raised important issues and concerns. Over all, the FEIS is much improved over the DEIS, thanks in large part to the thoroughness of public comments.

The thoroughness of the comments necessitated a thorough response, and these two volumes contain King County's effort to be fully responsive to the community and others with interest in the project.

How Comments and Responses are Organized in Volumes 3 and 4

For this EIS, King County has sorted and addressed comments according to chapter titles and subheadings of the DEIS. If a comment relates to Section 4.3.2 of the DEIS, then it will be listed under Section 4.3.2 in the Response to Comments.

Comments included in the Comments and Responses volumes have been transcribed from the original letters. In most cases, comments are quoted directly with no attempt to edit or revise the message. In some cases, to avoid repetition or to reduce lengthy, non-substantive material, comments are summarized or paraphrased rather than being included in their entirety. In many cases multiple comments are grouped together with a single response that addresses all of the comments in that group. Some repetitive and non-substantive comments have been omitted.

Comments received are reproduced in their entirety in Volumes 5 and 6.

Comment Letters and E-Mails

Those interested in seeing complete copies of comment letters can use the commenter's name to reference the complete letter from which the comment was taken (Volumes 5 and 6). The letters are also available on King County's web page.

The letters and e-mails presented in Volumes 5 and 6 are sorted by group, and then, unless otherwise indicated, in alphabetical order by author. The volumes contain the following comment group:

- **Volume 5.** Comment Letters Submitted by Agencies, the Vashon-Maury Island Community Council, paid consultants, and private organizations and public interest groups;
- **Volume 6.** Individual Comment Letters, E-Mails, and Handwritten Comment Forms.

SEPA Requirements for Response to Comments

SEPA Guidance to Respond to Public Comments

As defined by SEPA (WAC 197-11-560), possible responses to comments on the DEIS include:

- (a) Modify alternatives including the proposed action.*
- (b) Develop and evaluate alternatives not previously given detailed consideration by the agency.*
- (c) Supplement, improve, or modify the analysis.*
- (d) Make factual corrections.*

(e) Explain why the comments do not warrant further agency response, citing the sources, authorities, or reasons that support the agency's response and, if appropriate, indicate those circumstances that would trigger agency reappraisal or further response.

King County's Invitation of Comments

Following release of the DEIS on July 21, 1999, King County invited public comments for a 60-day period, which included the allowed 15-day extension period and an additional 15-day extension agreed to by the Applicant.

In addition, a public meeting was held on September 14, 1999 at Chautauqua Elementary School on Vashon Island. Over 1,600 people attended, making it one of the most well attended on a DEIS ever in King County.

Comment Overview

Common Issues

The most common issues raised are as follows:

Environmental Concerns

- inappropriate level of disturbance for Island community;
- loss or contamination of groundwater (Chapter 4);
- impacts on the shoreline, including impacts to threatened Puget Sound Chinook salmon, rockfish, and eelgrass (Chapter 6);
- risks to environmental health due to arsenic (Chapter 10); and
- loss of the quality of life (Chapter 11).

Procedural Concerns

- inadequate data to evaluate risks;
- false conclusions; and
- understated impacts.

Agency Concerns

Major agency comments came from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Both agencies provided detailed comments on marine environment and the effects of the project. King County and the EIS team consulted with the WDFW and WDNR to develop alternatives and otherwise revise the FEIS in response to their concerns.